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Reflections on Death.

A

S E R M O N,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH

OF

THE REV. ROBERT ROBINSON,

OF CAMBRIDGE,

DELIVERED AT THE NEW MEETING IN BIRMINGHAM,

JUNE 13, 1790.

And published at the Request of those who heard it, and of Mr. Robinson's
Family.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

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[PRICE ONE SHILLING]



THE PREFACE.

IT will be seen that nothing could have been more unexpected than a call to preach this Sermon. But such an opportunity of impressing the minds of my congregation with just sentiments concerning *death* and the proper *business of life*, I thought was not to be neglected, and their partiality prevailed upon me to publish what I composed for their use. It was also a tribute that I thought was due to the memory of a very worthy, and a very extraordinary man, though one with whom I had no previous acquaintance.

The Editor of the work that Mr. Robinson was printing at the time of his death will, I doubt not, be able to give some more particulars of his life than I am acquainted with, and also a correct account of his publications. Being of a studious turn, and having acquired a habit of composition, it is

probable that, if he had lived long, he would have written much; and it cannot be questioned but that the public would have derived great benefit from his labours. But, by his own account to me, he had not reached his fifty-fourth year.

As this is not a proper *funeral Sermon*, delivered in the presence of Mr. Robinson's family and friends, but was the result of the impressions made at the place where he died, it by no means supercedes such a discourse as is usually given in the place where a deceased minister has preached.

Whoever be employed on that mournful occasion, I join my prayers with his, that the great Being who is *the Father of the fatherless, and the widow's God*, may comfort all who mourn on this occasion, and that Mr. Robinson's place, as pastor of the congregation, may be filled by another equally qualified, and equally assiduous in discharging the duties of it.

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May all ministers of the gospel, of every denomination, devote themselves, as he did, to the service of the congregations entrusted to their care. Like him, and like Paul before him, may they *not shun* (Acts xx. 27) *to declare the whole council of God, and feed the flocks over which they are overseers; that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away,* 1 Pet. v. 4.

The following Extracts from a letter just received from one of Mr. Robinson's family and congregation will gratify my readers, and serve as an authority for some of the particulars advanced in the Sermon.

“ *Chesterton, June 12, 1790.*

“ Mr. Robinson has been decaying (though we were too fond of him to suffer ourselves to believe it) for the whole of the past twelve months. He has not enjoyed one day's health all that time, though, as he told his
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physician, he had not felt any bodily pain. He became by slow and imperceptible degrees greatly debilitated; but still we had no idea of so sudden a dissolution. He had promised himself much pleasure from an interview with you. We had filled our minds with the most agreeable expectations from this journey to Birmingham, both on his health and spirits. But the hopes of all are blasted, and instead of the beneficial effects which we had foretold (so opposite has been the plan of the ALL-WISE to our views) that it seems as if he had gone from home only to die. Is it not difficult under such circumstances to say, *The will of the Lord be done?* But this our religion demands, and it is in the exercise of religion only that we can receive consolation."

"Mr. Robinson seems to have died exactly, as, in the possession of perfect health, we have often heard him express a wish that he might die---suddenly---softly

softly--and alone! His wishes were always a law to his family, and they feel themselves, on this principle, much reconciled to the manner of his death. May we make them the laws of our conduct in every other respect."

"Mr. Robinson was a truly great man. He has left in the hearts of all his friends impressions which will never be obliterated. His life laid great numbers under obligations of the highest kind, whose bosoms his decease will fill with the deepest regret. No man ever taught with so much effect the benevolence and simplicity of christianity, nor followed the steps of his great master with more pleasure and fidelity. For many years, but especially for the last two or three of his life, he taught the doctrine of the unity of the great Cause of all things, expressly and effectually. I have often wished that a more intimate connection had subsisted between you and him. I am sure it would

would have been attended with much mutual pleasure, and, humanly speaking, with great benefit to mankind at large. He certainly possessed the finest powers of criticism, judgment, reasoning, and elocution; but he had not room for the exercise of his abilities, and the world will never know what they have lost in him. But I am not going to write his eulogium. You will forgive this tribute to the memory of my most excellent and affectionate friend."

"We wish that you would take as large a share as is convenient in the ministerial part of the funeral service, and that you will, if there be no impropriety in it, preach and print a sermon on the sad occasion."

ERRATUM—P. 15, l. last, for *think*, read *thing*.

A SERMON,

A
S E R M O N, &c.

BLESSED IS THAT SERVANT, WHOM HIS
LORD, WHEN HE COMETH, SHALL FIND SO
DOING.

MATT. xxiv. 46.

A Very recent event, with which none of you can be unacquainted, or unaffected, has drawn my attention to the words that I have read to you; and I hope it will not be unprofitable, if I take this opportunity of enlarging a little on such reflections as they have suggested.

It is, indeed, an extraordinary case, that the person who, so lately as the last Lord's-day, addressed you from this very pulpit, should have died in little more than two days after, and that another should be now addressing you on the occasion. Mr. Robinson had, indeed, laboured for some time under a disorder which had greatly weaken-

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ON THE DEATH OF

ed him. But still much vigour remained; so that, judging by appearances, he might have recovered, or at least have continued a long time. But after spending Tuesday in seemingly better health and spirits than he had done since his arrival among us, after eating his supper on the evening of that day with as much appetite as usual, and retiring without any complaint, he was found dead in his bed the next morning; and, by what was observed, he must have expired pretty early in the night. He had not himself, it was evident, any apprehension of his life being in danger; and though it appears that his friends had for him, it was by no means of such immediate danger.

What is more particularly awful, and instructive, in the event, is its being so *sudden*, and, consequently, so *unexpected*. Happy will it be for us, if like him, we be found *always ready*, that whenever it shall please God to call us hence by death, we may have done the duties of life, and receive the blessing pronounced upon the *faithful servant* in my text, whom his Lord, after a time of absence, found doing what he had been ordered to do.

As the parable is an instructive one, I shall recite the particulars of it. Our Lord, after foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and also his own coming to judge the world (the time of which he himself did not know, but only that it would be sudden and unexpected, like the coming of the flood upon the old world) exhorted his hearers to watchfulness. *Therefore, says he, be ye also ready, because in such an hour as ye think not the son of man cometh. Who then is that faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing; that is superintending his affairs, and those who were employed under him. Verily, I say unto you, he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

This, my brethren, represents the situation of all mankind. We are all the servants of God, and of Christ. We have all a certain duty appointed us to do; and, having received our instructions, we are for the present left to our own conduct, our master not appearing to give us any farther directions, or interfering in the least with us. But the time will certainly come when we shall be called to give an account of our conduct; and we shall then receive according to it. And this time is quite uncertain, on purpose, no doubt, that we should be always on our guard. For with respect to us, *after death comes the judgment*. Then the time of our probation expires, and the books of our account are shut up; there being *no work, or devise, no wisdom, or knowledge, in the grave, whither we are all hasting*. And when we awake at the general resurrection, it will only be to receive sentence according to what we have done, whether it shall have been good, or whether it shall have been evil.

In these circumstances well may we cry out with the apostle Peter, *What manner of persons ought we all of us to be, in all holy conversation*

versation and godliness. Certainly, we should live as those who expect to die. Because, die we must; and this care should be unremitted, because none of us can tell when it will be. We cannot tell what a single day, or even an hour, may bring forth. But though this event be unfixed with respect to our knowledge of it, it is absolutely fixed in itself, and with respect to God. For he has not only *appointed to all men once to die*, but, as we read in the book of Job, *There is an appointed time to every man upon earth.—He has fixed bounds which we can neither pass, nor remove.*

On this interesting subject, I shall make a few observations.

1. All men naturally put off in their own thoughts the time of their death, and secretly flatter themselves with the hope of long life. Though they see others, in the same circumstances with themselves, called away by death every day, some by diseases, and others by sudden accidents; and though these events sometimes give them alarm, it presently vanishes, and they resume their former projects, which often look far into futurity,
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with as much confidence as ever; and they begin that to-day, which cannot be completed in many years to come.

Now this delusion, as it may be called, is upon the whole a happy one. For without it the business of life would not be done to any purpose. If any man was to know that he should certainly die to-morrow, or within any short and limited time, he would undertake nothing great, and that would benefit posterity. Or, though some might have the magnanimity to do this, such generous principles, and extensive views, are not to be expected of mankind in general. They hope to enjoy the fruits of their labour, and their efforts would languish if they thought that they were only labouring for others.

The labours even of literary men, which are designed to reach posterity, would be entered upon with much less vigour, and be executed with much less spirit, and consequently would not have the same effect, if the authors were to know that they should die as soon as they were accomplished, without having any opportunity of knowing how they were received. Mr. Robinson had finished,
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and nearly printed off, a large work*, which I doubt not will be very valuable, and serve the cause of truth and of mankind; and his long continued attention to it was probably one of the remote causes of his illness and death. But can we suppose that he would have ever undertaken it, if he had foreseen how short a time he had to live? Such labour and perseverance are not to be expected of men who have death in continual and certain prospect. The idea of long life is absolutely necessary for these important purposes; and for this reason, no doubt, it has pleased divine providence to keep death, as it were, out of our sight, and that, in a general way, the near approach of it should surprize us.

2. The proper preparation for death does not at all depend upon our continual thinking of it. It would not only imbitter the enjoyment, but obstruct the labours, of life. Let men only pursue the business of *this* life properly, and without particularly thinking of *another*, they will always be ready for it. Let

* It is a *History of Baptism*, a large volume in quarto, printed by subscription; and which, it is hoped, the friends of free inquiry and literary merit will encourage.

men do what is right and honourable, what is beneficial to their families, their country, and the world, and at the same time cultivate a spirit of piety and gratitude to God, and a dependance upon his providence; and then let them freely indulge their views to the utmost bounds of human life, or beyond it. It will only give the greater extent, and the greater energy, to their pursuits. And though they should be carried off the stage before they have accomplished half their undertakings, death will find them prepared, and others may finish what they have begun. By this means, also, they themselves will do more than men of narrower views will be capable of.

It is, no doubt, highly necessary that men should know that they are to die, that there is another world after this, and that they should be informed what course of actions will prepare them to exchange one state for another to the greatest advantage, that by this means they may form to themselves proper maxims for their conduct in life. It is also expedient that men should think of death, and another world, so much as is necessary to make them adhere to those maxims.

But

But an exprefs attention to them occasionally, in a calm hour, when the bufinefs of the day, or of the week, is over, will impreß them upon the mind as much as is neceffary for the purpofe; fo that we may never wholly lofe fight of them, and they may habitually influence our conduct, and keep us in the right path of life. And this they may do, though in the time of action they be not attended to at all.

Thus, if a man have a journey to perform, it is fufficient that he think of the object of it, fo as to take his meafures properly, before he fets out. But after this he may purfue his journey, and with fpirit too, though he fhould give but little attention to the end or ufe of it. The moment that he fhould take a wrong road, he would recollect himfelf, and recover the right one.

Such is the bufinefs of life. *Whatever our hand findeth to do*, if it be only right in itfelf, and proper for us to do, we fhould *do it with all our might*, giving our whole attention to it. But this we could not do

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if, at the same time, we were continually interrupted with the thought of death and another world. Thoughts of this kind would be as foreign to our proper object, and as much obstruct our endeavours after it, as the thinking about any other thing.

The constant idea of death would both diminish our ardour in the proper business of life, and lead to that *fear of it*, which, as Paul says, subjects a man to *perpetual bondage*. Let us only be careful to act as becomes accountable creatures, act the upright and honourable part in life, do our duty with respect to God and our fellow-creatures, and then, whether we think of death or not, it will never find us unprepared. It may be unexpected, but it will never be unwelcome.

It is, indeed, of all things to be desired, that death should come when we least think of it; because it spares us much distressing and useless apprehensions*. Let the best

* Since this sermon was delivered I have been informed that it was always the wish of Mr. Robinson that his death might be sudden. This was also the wish of Dr.

of men know that he shall certainly die at any particular period. Let it be after a week, a month, a year, or any certain number of years, and he would not be half so happy in that week, month, or year, as he would be with the idea of the possibility of its being after many years, though with the possibility also of its coming within a single day.

In consequence of a man's knowing the exact time of his death, he would, no doubt, think of it continually, and he would spend much time in meditation and prayer. But this is not the proper business of human life. Meditation and prayer are only the *means* to a certain *end*; and it is very possible, in this as in other cases, to give too much time and attention to the means, and thereby neglect the end.

If the frequent thinking of death, joined with incessant reading, meditation, and prayer,

Taylor of Norwich and afterwards of Warrington, and they were both found dead in their beds, when there was no apprehension of immediate danger, in either of their cases.

were the right plan of human life, we should all become monks and nuns, shut ourselves up from all society, and consequently from the proper duties of it. But then we should find that our constant *thinking* about death had not at all contributed to the proper preparation for it. We should incur the sentence of the *slothful*, though not that of the *wicked* servant, and by no means that of the *good* and *faithful* one. We came into the world to do something, and not to do nothing, to *act*, and not merely to *think*. And if we act at all, we must attend to what we are about, or we shall never do it as it ought to be done.

We see, then, that there is nothing to be regretted with respect to the *suddenness* of death, but that, on the contrary, if we live so as that we shall have no reason to fear to die, the more unexpected it comes the better.

3. The place, the manner, and other circumstances of our deaths, are of little moment. Mr. Robinson died at a distance from his family; and this, no doubt, would have had an unpleasant effect upon him, if he

he had foreseen the approach of death, and had had any directions to give about the disposal of his affairs. But this, every prudent man will do in good time, in health, and at leisure. This being supposed, and all *apprehension* of dying being precluded, his dying *from home* would make no difference, except to his friends. Let us die wherever we may, and let us be disposed of as those who happen to be about us may think proper, we shall all meet at the general summons at the last day. Whether we rise again from the remotest parts of the earth, or from the bottom of the sea; whether we be consumed by fire, or devoured by beasts, birds, or worms, it will make no difference. We have no occasion to inquire into the means by which God will effect his purpose of raising mankind from the dead. *He that has promised is able to perform.* The resurrection of Christ from a state of actual unquestionable death, is a sure pledge of ours. That was a real *miracle*, requiring a power equal to that of *creation*, and our restoration to life cannot require more.

4. The fear of death is much increased by superstition, and strictly speaking, should
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not be regarded as an *evil*. It is an important part of the present system, that men, as well as other animals, should live *in succession*, and that the individuals should not continue upon the stage beyond a limited, though uncertain time. By this means the improvement of the whole species, and of the world, is provided for. As human nature is constituted, the same persons, always carrying about with them the same *habits*, and *prejudices*, acquired in early life, would make very slow advances in knowledge, compared with those that may be expected of the young, who have fewer prejudices, and whose minds are more impressible than they become afterwards. And yet we cannot doubt but that this tendency to *fixedness*, with respect to *sentiments* and *character*, is another wise part of the same system. We should be greatly disappointed, and at a loss how to act, if we did not find our friends, and our enemies too, in a great measure the same to-morrow that they were to-day. It would be like an unexpected change in the properties of any other substances in nature.

Death, being the certain lot of all, should not, however, be lamented as a particular evil.

evil. The greatest, the wisest, and the best of our species, are not exempted from it; so that it is no mark of the divine displeasure. The *pain* attending it, in itself considered, is, I doubt not, far less than we are apt to imagine. A death properly *natural*, or from mere age (though it must be acknowledged there are not many instances of it) I am confident, from facts known to myself, is no more painful than going to sleep. When persons die by *disease*, there is sufficient reason to think that the last moments are generally the least painful; and what men suffer from disease we most of us know already.

The generality of mankind, who are fully employed in their several occupations, suffer very little from the dread of death. It is chiefly nursed by superstition, and the too busy imaginations of persons who are too much at their ease, and who mix together things that can never meet. The man who thinks of any thing that takes place after he has expired, such as his being laid out, the coffin, the funeral ceremonies, the close and dark grave, &c. thinks of what he cannot know any think of when he is dead. All
that

that he will recollect is, that he shut his eyes on this world, and opened them again (to his apprehension immediately after) at the general resurrection. To *him* all that is intermediate, be the interval in itself ever so long, will be nothing at all. He will seem to awake from a perfectly sound sleep.

5. If death be not naturally terrible to *man*, is it still less so to the *christian*? To him *death* has no *sting*, and the *grave* no *victory*. To him it is a moment of triumph and exultation. To him it must appear to be very improperly called *death*; since it is the gate, or passage, to a new and better *life*. To him it is, therefore, more properly a *birth*. It is a death not to *him*, but to his pains, infirmities, and imperfections, bodily and mental. And who would not wish to get rid of *them*? It is an exchange of an imperfect for a more perfect state, an exchange of the society (at least occasional society) of the vicious and troublesome, for that of the virtuous and friendly. For heaven is a state into which *nothing unclean can enter*. The *new heavens and the new earth* will be the abode of the righteous only. And if the
future

future world, in itself considered, should be no better than the present, would not this circumstance alone make it a heaven to us ?

6. The change of our *condition* by death may not be so great as we are apt to imagine. As our *natures* will not be *changed*, but only *improved*, we have no reason to think that the *future world* (which will be adapted to our merely improved nature) will be materially different from *this*. And, indeed, why should we ask, or expect, any thing more? If we should still be obliged to provide for our subsistence by exercise, or labour; is that a thing to be complained of, by those who are supposed to have acquired fixed habits of industry, becoming rational beings, and who have never been able to bear the languor of absolute rest, or indolence? Our future happiness has, with much reason, been supposed to arise from an increase of *knowledge*. But if we should have nothing more than the means of knowledge furnished us, as we have here, but be left to our own labour to find it out; is that to be complained of, by those who will have acquired both a *love of truth*, and a habit of *inquiring* after it? To make discoveries ourselves, though the search require time and labour, is unspeakably more

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pleasing

pleasing than to learn every thing by the information of others. If the *immortality* that is promised to us in the gospel, should not be *necessary* and *absolute*, and we should only have the *certain means* of making ourselves immortal, we should have much to be thankful for. What the scriptures inform us concerning a future life is expressed in general terms, and often in figurative language. A more particular knowledge of it is wisely concealed from us. In whatever it be that the happiness of heaven consists, as it is *the free gift of God by Jesus Christ*, it will exceed every thing to which we could, by any ~~virtue~~ of ours, lay a proper *claim*.

Our deceased friend was a most laborious inquirer after truth, but as that constituted a great part of his happiness here, so it may do hereafter. We can only wish to begin in a future world as we end here. A state of continual *improvement* is infinitely more pleasing than any *fixed state* whatever, to such beings as we are.

Let us, then, neither indulge our fears with respect to death, nor our hopes with respect to the state beyond it, too much. Let us fear God, and we need no other fear. Let us love virtue, and enure ourselves to the practice

tice of it, and we shall have sufficient ground of hope. Let us remember that we are *men*, and not *angels*; and look for a happiness suited to *human nature*.

As many of you are, in a great measure, strangers to Mr. Robinson, whose death has been the occasion of this discourse, you will naturally wish to have some information concerning him. But of him, as of most literary men, much is not to be known.

He was a wonderful example of a man rising to considerable eminence by his own exertions. His education was no other than that of a grammar school, and his first serious turn was given to him by the preaching of Mr. Whitfield. But he gradually devoted himself wholly to the work of the ministry among the Baptists, and in the discharge of the duties of it, especially in his labours among the lower ranks of people, he greatly distinguished himself. What you saw and heard of him here would give you no idea of what he had been. For the disorder to which he had been more than a year subject, and which, it is said, was brought on by intense, and I may say intemperate, application to study, had weakened his

mind, as well as his body, and, as is always the case, much more than he was himself aware of; though he still retained a fluency of speech, and a command of language, that few can boast. When he was in his prime, he used, without any art, or ostentation of oratory, perfectly to command the attention of his audience; and, always speaking *extempore*, he could vary his style and address according to his hearers, in a manner that was truly wonderful. His writings discover equal powers of imagination, and of judgment. His *Sermons, preached in the villages near Cambridge*, are remarkable for their plainness and propriety. But at the time that they were composed he had not acquired all the sentiments that he had before he died.

What most of all distinguished Mr. Robinson was his earnest *love of truth*, and his laborious *search after it*. Educated in Calvinistic principles, he was the greatest part of his life very zealous in the propagation of them. I myself remember hearing him many years ago explaining the Calvinistic doctrine of justification, to a crowded and very attentive audience in London. Mr. Lindsey's resignation of his living in the church of England, and his writings in defence of *unitarianism*,

rianism, exciting a good deal of attention, Mr. Robinson published a book entitled *a plea for the divinity of Christ*, one of the most plausible of the treatises on that side of the question, and the only one that Mr. Lindsey thought proper to reply to. For this work Mr. Robinson was very much caressed by the friends of the established church; and on this account, I believe it was, that he had the offer of considerable preferment in the church of England, which, however, with great magnanimity, he rejected.

Notwithstanding his long attachment to the doctrine of the *trinity*; yet continuing to read and think on the subject, he came at length to change his opinion, and before he died he was one of the most zealous *unitarians* *. The subject of the *divine unity*

* I have the happiness to think that this important change in Mr. Robinson's sentiments was, in some measure, occasioned by my own writings. For in the only letter that I ever received from him (which was in answer to one that I was desired to write, in order to invite him to preach our charity sermon) he says, what, without mentioning his name, I have already quoted in the Preface to my *Letters to Mr. Burn*, note, p. 9. "I am indebted to you for the little I know of rational defensible Christianity. But for your friendly aid I fear I should have gone from *enthusiasm* to *deism*; but a faith founded upon evidence rests on a rock."

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was generally uppermost in his mind, and he urged it not only *in season*, but as you would observe, even *out of season*. Such, also, was his power of persuasion, such the excellence of his character, and the just esteem in which he was held, that, in time, his congregation came almost universally to embrace his opinions, as I was myself informed about a year ago, by one of them, who had himself been a trinitarian, but who was then an unitarian.

Mr. Robinson has long been distinguished as a *writer*; and his zeal as a *dissenter* soon brought upon him the peculiar indignation of the friends of the establishment. Upon every occasion of any thing being brought before parliament in favour of the dissenters, his *Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Non-conformity* (which I would take this opportunity of recommending to you) has never failed to be produced by our enemies, as an evidence of our hostile intentions with respect to the established church. But it is no proof of the excellence of that establishment, that so acute an observer as Mr. Robinson, and who, I believe, had himself been a member of it, should come to think so ill of it. Severe as his censures are, I have no doubt of
their

their being perfectly just ; and in matters of *religion*, there is certainly no room for *complaisance*. Let every thing of this nature be most rigorously examined, and let it stand or fall by its own merit.

I would particularly recommend to your imitation Mr. Robinson's exemplary conduct in the education that he gave to his numerous family, not only in religion, but in all branches of useful knowledge ; by no means neglecting his daughters. To their understandings his good sense taught him to give the same cultivation as to those of his sons, that is, the highest of which they were capable. Getting over a vulgar and debasing prejudice (that women, being designed for domestic cares, should be taught nothing beyond them) and finding his daughters capable of it, he himself taught them the learned and the modern languages, and he got them instructed by others in mathematics and philosophy. Certainly, the minds of women are capable of the same improvement, and the same furniture, as those of men ; and it is of importance that, when they have leisure, they should have the same resource in reading, and the same power of instructing the world by writing, that men have ; and that if they be
mothers,

mothers, they be capable of assisting in the instruction of their children; to which they have generally more opportunity to attend than the fathers.

In all *labours* proper for his station, and for the public, Mr. Robinson was *most abundant*. In this let us imitate him. Whatever our respective callings may be, let us like him faithfully and assiduously discharge the duties of them. Our master is now absent, but he will in due time make his appearance. May we so conduct ourselves, as *not to be ashamed before him at his coming*. Warned, more especially, by the *suddenness* of the death of Mr. Robinson, and that of many others of which we are continually hearing, let us see that we be *always ready*; since *at such an hour as we think not the son of man may come*.

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THE END.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THOUGH this discourse is said to be published at the request of Mr. Robinson's family, it may be proper to observe, that this was only in the letter mentioned in the Preface, which was written even before it was delivered, and therefore by no means implies their approbation of the particulars contained in it. I have since found that some things advanced in it, require to be corrected.

Mr. Robinson was educated under the Rev. Joseph Brett, at Scarning in Norfolk, where the late Mr. Norris, the present Lord High Chancellor, and most of the gentlemen of that county, received the rudiments of learning. There Mr. Robinson was taught the Latin, Greek, and French languages, and he was a great favourite with his master, on account of his "large capacity, uncommon genius, and refined taste," which were the words his master used when speaking of him at twelve years of age. He added, that
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“ he expected great honour from him in
“ future life.” This was when Mr. Robin-
son was intended for the church; and it
does not appear that he was ever engaged in
business.

Though there is no doubt of Mr. Robin-
son having been an unitarian, and of the
greater (and especially the younger) part of
his congregation having become so, during
his ministry, it was not the consequence of
his preaching the unitarian doctrine openly,
but in an incidental, but such as proved to
be the most effectual, manner. What is said
of his sentiments and conduct in this dis-
course was suggested chiefly by what was
seen of him at Birmingham.

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